

# Ladders – information for users

## Before using the ladder

Does your health permit you to use a ladder safely? Certain medical conditions and medication, as well as alcohol and drug misuse, can jeopardise your safety when using a ladder.

When transporting ladders on roof racks or loaded onto an HGV, ensure that they are secured or mounted appropriately to prevent damage.

Inspect the ladder after delivery and before using it for the first time, in order to check the condition and that all parts are good working order. Attach any parts which are still to be fitted to the ladder (e.g. cross pieces).

Visually inspect the ladder for damage to ensure that it is safe to use at the start of each working day that the ladder will be needed.

For commercial users, a regular check by a suitably competent person is required (in accordance with occupational health and safety legislation).

Ensure that the ladder is suitable for the respective activity in each case.

Never use a damaged ladder.

Remove all forms of contamination from the ladder, e.g. wet paint, dirt, oil and snow.

Before using a ladder for work, first carry out a risk assessment in accordance with occupational health and safety legislation.

## Positioning and setting up the ladder

The ladder must be set up in the correct position, e.g. at the correct clearance angle for single-section ladders (clearance angle of 65 to 75°) and the rungs or treads must be level. Stepladders must be fully opened.

Where fitted, locking devices must be fully secured before use.

The ladder must stand on flat, level and stable ground.

Lean single-section ladders against flat, firm surfaces and secure before use, e.g. tie down or fit appropriate stability devices.

Never re-position the ladder from above.

When setting up the ladder, take care that there is no possible risk of it being struck by pedestrians, vehicles or doors, for example. Lock doors (but not emergency exits) and windows in the working area, wherever possible.

Assess all existing risks in the working area posed by electrical equipment, e.g. high voltage overhead power lines or other bare electrical equipment.

The ladder must be set up on its feet and not on the rungs and/or steps.

The ladder should not be set up on a slippery surface, e.g. ice, polished surfaces or obviously contaminated but firm surfaces, where no additional measures have been taken to prevent the ladder from slipping or where the soiled areas are sufficiently clean to allow it.

## Using the ladder

Do not exceed the maximum load capacity of the respective type of ladder.

Do not overreach; users should keep their belt-buckle (i.e. their navel) between the stiles and stand with both feet on the same step or rung.

Do not climb up a single-section ladder to work at an elevated height without additional safety measures, e.g. by securing the ladder or using a suitable stability device.

Do not use stepladders for climbing up onto another level.

Do not use the top three steps/rungs of a single-section ladder as a support surface.

Do not use the top two steps/rungs of a stepladder without a platform and holding device as a support surface for the hand and/or knee.

Do not use the top four steps/rungs of a stepladder with an extension ladder attached as a support surface.

Ladders should only be used for light jobs of short duration.

For essential work which involves live parts or is close to overhead power lines, do not use ladders which conduct electricity (e.g. aluminium ladders).

Do not use ladders outdoors in adverse weather conditions, e.g. strong winds, icy conditions, packed snow.

Take precautionary measures to ensure that children cannot play on the ladder.

Lock doors (but not emergency exits) and windows in the working area, wherever possible.

Ascend and descend towards the ladder facing the work activity.

Ensure you have a firm handhold on the ladder when climbing up and down.

Do not use the ladder as a bridge.

Wear suitable footwear for climbing ladders.

Do not impose a side loading, e.g. when drilling into masonry and concrete.

Do not work on the ladder for long periods without regular breaks (tiredness is a risk).

When accessing a higher level, single-section ladders should project or be pushed out at least 1 metre above the landing point.

Any objects to be carried whilst climbing up the ladder should be light and easy to handle.

Avoid activities which impose a side loading on stepladders, e.g. drilling to the side into solid materials (e.g. masonry and concrete).

When working on a ladder, ensure one hand is firmly on the ladder or if this is not possible undertake extra safety precautions.

## **Maintenance and repair work**

Maintenance and repair work for ladders must be carried out as required by a specialist and in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

Ladders should be stored according to the manufacturers' instructions. In particular, they need to be protected against potential damage whilst in storage.

Ladders used for industrial purposes are to be inspected at regular intervals by a qualified person to establish that they are in a safe condition in accordance with occupational health and safety legislation.